

**KIM JONG IL**

**ON HAVING A CORRECT  
UNDERSTANDING OF  
NATIONALISM**

WORKING PEOPLE OF THE WHOLE WORLD, UNITE!

**KIM JONG IL**

**ON HAVING A CORRECT  
UNDERSTANDING OF  
NATIONALISM**

Talk to the Senior Officials of the Central Committee of  
the Workers' Party of Korea  
February 26 and 28, Juche 91 (2002)

It is important to have a correct understanding of nationalism. Only when they have such an understanding can people achieve national unity, champion the interests of the nation and contribute to the shaping of its destiny.

Nationalism came into being as an ideology for defending the interests of a nation in the course of the latter's formation and development. Although nations differ from one another in the period of their formation, every nation is a social community which has been formed and consolidated historically on the basis of a common kinship descent, language, residential area and culture, and is composed of various classes and strata. There is no person in any country or in any society who exists outside his or her nation, separate from it. Every person belongs to a class or stratum, and at the same time to a nation, endowing that person with both a national and a class character. Class character and national character and the demands of classes and nation are inseparable from each other. As a matter of fact, the classes and strata of a nation entertain different demands and interests owing to their different social and economic functions. However, all the members of a nation have the same stake in championing the independence and character of the nation and attaining national prosperity without distinction of the interests of their classes and strata. This is because the destiny of a nation is precisely the destiny of its individual members; in other words, the latter is dependent on the former. None will be happy with the sovereignty and honour of his or her nation being trampled upon and national character disregarded. It is the common ideological feeling and psychology of the members of a nation to love their nation, cherish its characteristics and interests, and

yearn for its prosperity. Nationalism reflects this feeling and psychology. In other words, nationalism is an ideology that advocates love for the nation and defence of its interests. Since people carve out their destiny while living within the nation-state as a unit, genuine nationalism constitutes patriotism. The progressive nature of nationalism lies in the fact that it is a patriotic ideology which advocates the defence of national interests.

Nationalism emerged as a progressive idea along with the formation and development of each nation. However, it was understood in the past as an ideology that defends bourgeois interests. It is true that in the days of the nationalist movement against feudalism, the newly-emergent bourgeoisie, upholding the banner of nationalism, stood in the van of the movement. At that time, the interests of both the masses of the people and the newly-emergent bourgeoisie were basically coincident in their struggle against feudalism. Therefore, the banner of nationalism seemed to reflect the common interests of the nation. As capitalism developed and the bourgeoisie became the reactionary ruling class after victorious bourgeois revolutions in various countries, nationalism was used as a means of defending the interests of the bourgeois class. The bourgeoisie disguised their class interests as national interests, and used nationalism as an ideological instrument for solidifying their class domination. This led nationalism to be understood, among the people, as a bourgeois ideology that runs counter to the national interests. We should distinguish clearly between true nationalism that loves the nation and defends its interests and bourgeois nationalism that advocates the interests of the bourgeois class. Bourgeois nationalism reveals itself as national egoism, national exclusivism and big-power chauvinism in the relationship between countries and

nations; it is reactionary in that it creates antagonism and disagreement between countries and nations, and checks the development of friendly relations between the various peoples of the world.

The original revolutionary theory of the working class failed to give a correct explanation of nationalism. It paid major attention to strengthening the international unity and solidarity of the working class all over the world—the fundamental problem in the then socialist movement—failing to pay due attention to the national problem. It went so far as to regard nationalism as an anti-socialist ideological trend, because bourgeois nationalism was doing great harm to the socialist movement. This is why progressive people in the past rejected nationalism, considering it incompatible with communism.

It is wrong to view communism as incompatible with nationalism. Communism does not advocate only the interests of the working class; it also advocates the interests of the nation—hence it is an ideology of loving the country and the people. Nationalism is also an ideology of loving the country and the people, as it defends the interests of the country and the nation. Love of the country and the people is an ideological emotion common to communism and nationalism; herein lies the ideological basis on which they can ally with one another. Therefore, there is no reason or ground to pit one against the other, and reject nationalism.

Nationalism does not conflict with internationalism. Mutual help, support and alliance between countries and nations—this is internationalism. Every country has its borders, and every nation has its identity, and revolution and construction are carried on with the country and nation as a unit. For this reason, internationalism finds its expressions in the

relationships between countries and between nations, a prerequisite for which is nationalism. Internationalism divorced from the concepts of nation and nationalism is merely an empty shell. A man who is unconcerned about the destiny of his country and nation cannot be faithful to internationalism. Revolutionaries of each country should be faithful to internationalism by struggling, first of all, for the prosperity of their own country and nation.

For the first time in history, the great leader President Kim Il Sung gave a correct explanation of nationalism, and elucidated the relationship between communism and nationalism and between communists and nationalists in his revolutionary practice of carving out the destiny of his country and people. He said that in order to be a true communist one must first become a true nationalist. With a determination to devote his life to his country and fellow-countrymen, he embarked on the road of revolution in his early years and created the immortal Juche idea, on the basis of which he established a Juche-oriented outlook on the nation, and scientifically expounded the essence and progressive character of nationalism. Through a correct combination of class character with national character and of the destiny of socialism with that of the nation, he realized an alliance between communists and nationalists, cemented the class and national positions of our socialism and led the nationalists to join the efforts for socialist construction and national reunification. Attracted by his broad magnanimity and noble personality, many nationalists took the patriotic road to national unity and national reunification, making a clean break with their erroneous pasts. Kim Ku, a life-long anti-communist, allied with communists, a patriotic changeover, in the twilight of his life, and Choe Tok Sin, a nationalist, was able to find

salvation as a patriot in the leader's embrace. The great leader treasured and championed the independence not only of our nation but also of the peoples of the rest of the world. He devoted all his efforts to the cause of making the whole world independent, as well as to the Korean revolution. We can say that there has been no man in the world as great as him, who devoted his whole life to the nation's independence and prosperity, and a bright future for mankind. He was the most steadfast communist and, at the same time, a peerless patriot, true nationalist and paragon among internationalists.

I also assert, as the leader instructed, that one must be an ardent patriot, a true nationalist, in order to become a genuine revolutionary, a communist. The communist who fights for the realization of the independence of the masses of the people must first of all be a true nationalist. Those who fight for their people, their country and their homeland are genuine communists, true nationalists and ardent patriots. Those who do not love their own parents, brothers and sisters cannot love their country and compatriots. Likewise, those who do not love their own homeland and people cannot become communists. We are inheriting with fidelity the great leader's noble idea of loving the country, the nation and the people, and making every effort to rally all the sections of the nation by dint of all-embracing politics, and lead them to the road of patriotism.

It is not communists but imperialists who oppose nationalism and place obstacles in the way of the independent development of nations at present. The imperialists are manoeuvring cunningly to realize their dominationist ambition on the plea of "globalization" and "integration." They claim that the ideal of building a sovereign nation-state or the love for country and nation is a "national prejudice lagging behind the times," and "globalization" and "integration" are the trend

of the times in the present situation, when science and technology are developing rapidly and economic exchanges between countries are being conducted briskly on an international scale. Today, when every country and nation is carving out its own destiny with its own ideology, system and culture, there can never be a political, economic, ideological and cultural “integration” of the world. The manoeuvres of the US imperialists for “globalization” and “integration” are aimed at turning the world into what they call a “free” and “democratic” world styled after the United States, and thus bringing all countries and nations under their domination and subordination. The present era is one of independence. Human history is propelled by the struggle of the masses of the people for independence, not by the dominationist ambition and aggressive policy of the imperialists. The manoeuvres of the imperialists for “globalization” and “integration” are doomed to failure, as they are opposed by the vigorous efforts of the world’s peoples aspiring after independence.

We should resolutely oppose and reject the manoeuvres of the imperialists for “globalization” and “integration,” and staunchly fight to preserve the excellent characteristics of our nation and safeguard its independence. We frequently emphasize the Korean-nation-first principle so as to preserve the national character and defend the independence of the nation.

A most important task facing us today in championing and realizing national independence is to reunify the country. Our nation, which has inherited a time-honoured history and culture and the tradition of patriotism, has been divided into north and south by foreign forces for more than half a century. The division of the territory and the nation is blocking the way for the nation’s concerted development, and inflicting untold



misery and hardship upon it. National reunification is not only a vital demand of our people but also the unanimous will and aspiration of the entire nation.

The historical Pyongyang Meeting and the June 15 North-South Joint Declaration ushered in a new era of great national unity and independent reunification. The North-South Joint Declaration stipulates all the principles and ways for solving the problems arising in reunifying the country independently by the united efforts of our own nation. The declaration is a programme of national unity and a general principle of national reunification, based on the idea of “by our nation itself” and permeated with the spirit of loving the country and people. The substantial guarantee for independence, peace and national reunification lies in supporting and thoroughly carrying out the declaration. Holding aloft the North-South Joint Declaration as a general principle of reunification, the entire nation must launch a nationwide struggle to accomplish the historic cause of national reunification.